



## Somalia Drought Response 2011/2012

The food security crisis that unfolded in the Horn of Africa in 2010 and peaked mid-2011, following two seasonal rain failures, affected 13 million people, four million of whom were in Somalia. A combination of drought, war and restrictions on aid organisations over the last two decades have resulted in the entrenchment of widespread poverty. With drought came a significant reduction in agricultural production and, increases in food prices, crippling the lives and livelihoods of millions of people.

While some Somalis travelled to Kenya and Ethiopia, the majority remained in-country, where aid organisations were struggling to scale-up due to insecurity and lack of access. In July 2011, the UN declared that parts of the south had met technical famine criteria. Oxfam responded by scaling up its efforts to maintain access to clean water, disseminate hygiene messages, and provide non-food items and training to partners. Cash transfer projects were further initiated through partners across Oxfam's operational areas, while work treating acutely malnourished children, counselling pregnant women and supporting immunisation services in Mogadishu, started prior to the scale-up, continued. A target of reaching 1.2 million people was set

## Evaluation method

The evaluation was carried out by an external evaluator that applied Oxfam's Humanitarian Indicator Tool (HIT). This tool is designed to help evaluators assess the degree to which a humanitarian response meets recognised quality standards. The HIT consists of 12 quality standards, each with defined benchmarks. In applying the tool, the evaluator reviews the available evidence and rates the extent each standard was 'met', 'partially met' or 'not met'. Scores are then assigned against each standard and a cumulative total calculated. Three standards – timeliness, coverage, and measuring adherence to Sphere and Oxfam quality standards – are given twice the weight of the others, given their greater importance.



Figure 1: Map of Somalia, credit Oxfam Ireland

# Results

The cumulative score indicates that the Somalia response was only partially successful in meeting Oxfam's quality standards. The timeliness standard is perhaps the most telling. For slow onset crises, particularly those with established early warning systems as in the case of Somalia, the onus is on the organisation to register deterioration and respond in a timely manner that saves lives and protects livelihoods before it becomes a crisis. Oxfam was slow to react. It was only after the situation had been declared an emergency that the organisation acted to scale-up its internal capacity, take on new partners, and expand into new geographic areas. Despite this, Oxfam made notable headway in expanding its work with new partners and ensuring that a significant proportion of the programme was focused in worst-affected areas. In the end, over 900,000 people were assisted – 23% of the total affected population. The response was particularly successful in appropriately contextualising Sphere standards and using a variety of tools to measure and demonstrate progress.

Standard	Level of achievement	Rating
Timeliness	Not met	0/4
Coverage	Met	4/4
Technical aspects of programme measured against Sphere and Oxfam quality standards	Partially met	2/4
Indicators (both process and impact) in place and being measured	Partially Met	1/2
Feedback/complaints system in place and functioning and documented evidence of consultation and participation	Met	2/2
Partners fully engaged in all aspects of the project cycle	Met	2/2
Programme reflects measures to address dignity and protection issues	Partially met	1/2
Programme delivery addresses gender and specific needs of vulnerable groups	Partially met	1/2
Exit strategy/recovery plan in place	Partially met	1/2
Evidenced utilisation of contingency plan in last humanitarian response	Partially met	1/2
Programme addresses advocacy issues	Met	2/2
Programme is linked to/will be linked to DRR interventions in area	Not applicable	-
<b>Final rating</b>		<b>17/28</b>

## Good practice & enablers

The effectiveness review found that the response was particularly successful operating in a context that required remote management. Programme quality, accountability and learning were supported by employing independent monitoring firms to provide third party information, and open communication channels were maintained with partners to triangulate and verify information. Mobile phone technology was also used for both monitoring and to establish a beneficiary 'hotline'. Oxfam further co-chaired the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) cluster, which provided an opportunity to lobby for and develop contextualised sectoral standards, influencing wider programme quality. Similarly, it made good use of established interagency standards attuned to the operating environment, e.g. linking cash transfer values to the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) minimum food expenditure basket.

## Going forward

Specific action will be taken to update Oxfam's gender strategy and better ensure that gender issues are captured at the assessment stage and incorporated throughout implementation. A gender/ protection advisor will also be recruited to work directly with the partners to provide relevant support at field level, as well as linking with the advocacy/policy in Nairobi. In addition, preparedness plans will be improved to increase the speed at which response and scale up occurs. Additional internal capacity will be developed by recruiting experienced Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning, and Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods MEAL and EFSL Managers to work closely with existing programme teams and counterparts.

Photo credit: Caroline Gluck